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Farmers' Reactions

to

The Stamp Plan

(FOR ADMINISTRATIVE USE ONLY)

October 26, 1940

Division of Program Surveys

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The Division of Program Surveys made its first report on reactions to the Stamp Plan last April. Results were based on the views of city residents alone. Since then, further studies have been conducted in both rural and urban areas. The present report covers the first segment of that work. It is based on 648 interviews with farm men in 20 states between the end of March and the middle of May, 1940.

Summary of Results

Two of the major problems facing the Surplus Marketing Administration in increasing farmers' acceptance of the Stamp Plan are the widespread ignorance of the program's objectives, methods and achievements and the need to reduce the hostility of those unfavorable to the program. Of these, the former seems to be very much the more important according to this study. More than three-quarters of all farmers interviewed had either not heard of the Plan or knew so little about it as to be unable to express any reactions. On the other hand, approximately four-fifths of those with an opinion were favorable.

Our results suggest several points which might be considered in efforts to maximize the effectiveness of educational work in building farmer acceptance.

1. Farmers' knowledge about the Stamp Plan is quite meager. Not a single sub-group obtained by dividing the sample into groups by crop regions, tenure, education and economic levels showed even half the farmers able to express an opinion about it--indicating the need for a great deal more educational work.
2. The proportion who are informed about the Stamp Plan varies sizeably among crop regions, being three times as high in the Corn Belt as in the Eastern Dairy region--suggesting the possibility of some redistribution of educational efforts.
3. The most distinctive characteristic of those composing the uninformed group was their low educational level. This may indicate that the content of educational presentations or the informational media used are more suited to the better educated groups--corresponding changes may warrant consideration.
4. In this sample, most of those objecting to the Plan thought that it was concerned solely with the problems of the poor, and ignored farmers' needs entirely. Thus, an inadequate understanding of the Plan's purposes can be an important source of opposition. Actually, our materials reveal that such partial information is quite common. One-fourth of those who "know" about the Plan are unaware of the fact that it is supposed to be of any help to farmers. More than half feel that the primary focus of the Plan is to help the poor rather than the farmer--suggesting that even greater concentration on getting farmers to understand the Plan's double focus may prove very valuable in realizing three ends: forestalling opposition on the part of those who are as yet uninformed, in reducing the hostility of those now unfavorable, and, perhaps most important, in increasing the strength of support and enthusiasm among those farmers who are favorable to the Plan even though they believe it to be wholly or mostly focussed on helping the urban needy.

I. What proportion of farmers know of the Stamp Plan?

Nearly four-fifths of all farmers interviewed knew so little about the Stamp Plan as to have no basis for forming an opinion of it.

Have not heard of it	46%
Know of it so vaguely as to have no opinion	32%
Know of it and have opinion	22%
	<u>100%</u>

No. replies 648

A. Differences in knowledge of the Stamp Plan by population groups.

No significant differences in such knowledge were found either between owners and tenants or among the various economic levels. The farmer's education, however, did seem to be related to the extent of his information about the program.

	<u>Grade School</u>	<u>High School</u>	<u>College</u>
Have not heard of Plan or Know so little as to have no opinion	84%	70%	55%
Know of Plan and have opinion	<u>16</u> 100%	<u>30</u> 100%	<u>45</u> 100%
No. replies	450	123	44

These figures suggest that either the media used or the character of the informational presentations released are proving unequally effective in reaching all levels of education represented in the farm population.

B. Differences in Knowledge of the Stamp Plan by crop regions.

Information about the Plan seems to be most widespread among the Cash Corn and Feeder Corn areas and most restricted in the Eastern Dairy region. These regional differences seem to be operative over and beyond variations in educational levels among them.

	<u>Cash Corn</u>	<u>Feeder Corn</u>	<u>Cotton</u>	<u>Wheat</u>	<u>Eastern Dairy</u>
Have not heard of Plan or Know so little as to have no opinion	68%	68%	81%	85%	90%
Know of plan and have opinion	<u>32</u> 100%	<u>32</u> 100%	<u>19</u> 100%	<u>15</u> 100%	<u>10</u> 100%
No. replies	63	130	102	73	119

II. What do farmers think of the Stamp Plan?

Overwhelming approval is indicated by the one-fifth of our sample able to express an opinion.

Approval	82%
Disapproval	<u>18%</u>
	100%

No. replies	139
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Differences among population groups

The size of sample becomes so small, after the subtraction of those not expressing an opinion, that it is difficult to validate the results of further breakdowns statistically. Nevertheless, it is of interest to note that the proportion approving the Stamp Plan does not fall below 70% in any of the sub-groups resulting from classification of farmers' replies by tenure, by economic level or by amount of education. Furthermore, such breakdowns do suggest that:

1. Approval of the Plan appears to be substantially higher among college trained farmers than among those with either high school or grade school educations;
2. Farmers in the low economic group are materially less approving than those in the two higher groups;
3. No apparent difference in approval is found between owners and tenants.

Differences among crop regions cannot be reported because the numbers in each region expressing an opinion are too small.

III. What groups do they think will benefit from the operation of the Stamp Plan?

Three-fourths of those indicating who they thought would gain from the Plan mentioned farmers as at least one of the beneficiaries. More than half recognized that both farmers and the poor would be helped.

Groups helped by Plan

Farmers	20%
Only the poor	24
Both farmers and the poor, but latter more than former	37
Farmers, the poor and merchants	<u>19</u>
	100%
No. replies	135

Of the 11 who disapproved of the program, 8 thought that it was designed to benefit only the poor and another two felt that although farmers did get something, most of the gains went to the poor. Thus, if these tiny numbers are at all suggestive, it would appear that much of the relatively small opposition found seemed to be concentrated among those who believe that the Stamp Plan is of little or no help to farmers.

IV. What reasons are given most frequently for favoring or opposing the Stamp Plan?

Two-fifths of the mentions of reasons favoring the Stamp Plan emphasized its value to farmers.

Stamp Plan is a worthwhile substitute, in whole or in part, for other farm aid programs	9%
Helps farmers by removing surpluses	30
Aid diets	19
Gives the poor necessities not luxuries, booze, etc.	24
Should be extended to more of needy groups	4
Plan is better than previous surplus commodities distribution	<u>14</u>
	100%
No. replies	146

Reasons for opposing the Stamp Plan drew 26 mentions, mostly concerned with viewing it as another subsidy for pampered relievers.

	<u>No. of Mentions</u>
Too easy for relievers, too much spent on them now	18
Graft in administration of Plan	7
Government spending too much	<u>1</u>
Total mentions	26

Details of Sample

Period Covered: March 26 - May 18, 1940

Number of interviews: 648

Location of interviews:

New Hampshire
Vermont
Massachusetts
Connecticut
New York

Indiana
Illinois
Iowa
Minnesota
North Dakota

South Dakota
Nebraska
Kansas
Texas
Arkansas

Louisiana
Alabama
Georgia
South Carolina
North Carolina

